

2015 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG)

Application period opens December 7, 2015, and closes January 16, 2016.

Below is a synopsis of Assistance to Firefighters Grant funding opportunities. This is not a detailed explanation of all of the available opportunities or requirements. This information is provided, not legal advice, but as information to encourage fire department leadership and other public safety officials within the State of Indiana to actively pursue this grant funding opportunity.

The 2015 application guide is located online at <https://www.fema.gov/welcome-assistance-firefighters-grant-program>. It is recommended that you download the guide and read over any sections of interest.

Determining Whether to Apply

As you decide whether your fire department or group of fire departments should apply, there are several items that you should consider. Competition for grant funding is intense. You will have to work hard during the application process to help those who review the application understand your true needs and why you can't fund those needs at the local or regional level.

The AFG resource guide has a significant amount of suggestions regarding how to improve your grant application.

Questions to ask:

- is your FD eligible?
- is your project eligible?
- is the funding request within the limits of the grant?
- who is authorized to file an application for your organization?

A major question, and one that can take a FD out of contention immediately, is: are you current with your NFIRS reporting requirement?

If this is your first time filing an application for an AFG, you will need to obtain considerable information about your FD, community and risks. Most of the data needed is public record available across the internet or through your local or state government.

Creating Narrative

The narrative portion is a critical component of the application. The reviewers will read and dissect your narrative to look for fluff, bluff or unnecessary stuff. Be careful regarding what you say in the narrative - be truthful and realistic. Be prepared to answer questions after your submissions has been reviewed. The reviewers are fire service personnel who have practical experience in a variety of sizes, types and structures of fire departments.

Training narrative - are your firefighters certified to the NFPA 1001 level? If not, do you have a plan to obtain the certification? Answer the question in such a manner that

shows you are working to comply with the NFPA 1001 standard, rather than expressing frustration with the NFPA or your state training system for having such requirements.

Financial need narrative - Three common mistakes made by applicants are:

- 1) not providing enough financial information;
- 2) not providing true information about finances; and
- 3) not writing about the district's economic situation.

Eligible Projects

What projects are eligible for funding under the AFG program?

Protective Equipment:

- PPE, if your current equipment is more than 10 years old
- SCBA, less than 2 NFPA standard cycle old
- When you purchase PPE/SCBA there must be a training component included. The cost of delivering the training can be grant eligible.

Training projects:

- NFPA 1001 Firefighter I/II
- EMT
- Hazmat Operations
- The priorities set by FEMA are different for urban, suburban and rural FDs
- Look at the FEMA training matrix / funding for low or even medium priority training activities are unlikely to receive funding
- Hands-on instructor led training that meets a national standard and results in a state or national certification, providing the greatest training benefit, is desirable
- Regional training opportunities receive the highest consideration

Other eligible funding opportunities:

- Minor station alterations to support training activities, not to exceed \$10,000
- Overtime expenses can be paid to career firefighters to attend training or backfill positions
- Compensation to volunteers for wages lost to attend training (However, overtime or backfill expenses for volunteers are not eligible)

Modifications to facilities

- Highest priority is for stations occupied 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Cannot be used to change the structure's footprint or profile
- Funds can be used for exhaust removal systems, smoke or fire alarm notification systems and sprinkler systems

Wellness and Fitness

Potential eligible activities are:

- Initial medical exams
- Job-related immunizations
- Annual medical and fitness evaluations
- Behavioral health

Equipment communications projects

- Radios / radio systems more than 15 years old or no longer manufactured
- Request to become compliant with Federal Communications Commission mandates such as P25
- Mobile radios, portable radios, pagers, base radios and in apparatus repeaters
- For more information, review FEMA's high/medium/low priority matrix

Micro Grants

- Only allowed for 2 grant cycles
- Projects less than \$25,000
- Not a separate application
- 80 percent of micro grant requests went forward for peer review

New Vehicle Projects

- 50 percent of applications are for new vehicles each year
- There is significant competition in this category
- Choose the appropriate class of apparatus for your specific needs
- Before selecting this type of project, look at the FEMA priority matrix for vehicles
- The matrix details high, medium and low priority rankings for vehicles
- Medium and low priority vehicles are almost certain not to be funded

The Indiana Department of Homeland Security and the Indiana State Fire Marshal encourages fire departments to look at projects and needs for the next year to determine specific needs that improve a local or regional capability eligible for funding under the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program.

Answers to various funding questions can be found on the AFG website...

<https://www.fema.gov/welcome-assistance-firefighters-grant-program>

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